



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

November 21, 2013

REQUEST: Multiple Principal Structures on a Business Lot Adjacent to a Residential Lot – 5200 Moravia Road

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Martin French

PETITIONER(S): Richardson Engineering on behalf of Beatrice Properties LLC

OWNER: Beatrice Properties LLC

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 5200 Moravia Road is located on the eastern side of the street, approximately 505 feet north of its intersection with Sinclair Lane. The property has approximately 452 feet of frontage along Moravia Road and contains approximately 1.752 acre. It is currently improved with a one-story commercial building that was originally designed for and used as radio broadcasting studios. This property is zoned B-2-1.

General Area: Adjacent to this property on its north is a large group of garden apartments. Adjacent to this property on its east is a radio transmitting tower. Across Moravia Road from this property is a public school adjoining another large group of garden apartments. The garden apartments and the school property are all zoned Residential (R-5 or R-6). To the southeast of this property and the radio tower is a 50-year old shopping plaza.

HISTORY

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The proposed action is consistent with the City of Baltimore's Comprehensive Master Plan, LIVE EARN PLAY LEARN, Live Goal 2, Objective 1: Improve Design Quality of Baltimore's Built Environment. The proposed redevelopment of this property would result in removal of the existing plain building that was deliberately built not to address the street, and its replacement with two structures oriented toward Moravia Road. The property would also be landscaped in a way that does not now exist and would be more compatible with the nearby residential area.

ANALYSIS

This property's redevelopment is constrained by its original use, because service of the radio transmitting tower behind it requires traversing this property from Moravia Road. As a result, there is an easement across this property that effectively prevents construction of a single large commercial building. To accommodate this easement, the site has been engineered with parking centrally located on the property and two commercial buildings to the north and south of the parking area. This allows the easement to double as a drive aisle in the parking lot. One of the tower's anchor cables reaches into this property, further limiting new structure sites.

As the existing structure has limited commercial re-use potential, the property owner desires to respond to market demands by replacing it with two new structures. The larger, on the north side of the property, would be a public laundry facility; the smaller, on the south side of the property, is intended for use as a restaurant or similar retail establishment. To accommodate patrons, the parking lot would hold up to 83 vehicles, as well as provide spaces for six bicycles.

To provide this number of spaces, while also providing on-site storm-water management, approximately one-third of the spaces have been located in the front of the proposed structures. The engineer and the Site Plan Review Committee worked to develop a site plan to satisfy commercial demand for parking, while providing an improved appearance as seen from Moravia Road with appropriate landscaping between the parking lot and the street, which received final approval on October 30, 2013. The landscaping will include maples and oaks and shrubbery, along with a low metal picket fence.

This site plan required approval of variances of side yard setback requirements contained in the Zoning Code. While the existing structure had been built exactly 10 feet from and along the northern lot line in order to comply with this requirement, the two proposed structures each would have a rear corner project to within 6 feet and 4 feet, respectively, of the side lot lines. The Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals heard the variance requests and approved them, subject to conditions agreed upon by the developer's representative and the representative of management of the adjacent garden apartments, on November 12, 2013. Those conditions limit intrusion onto the adjacent residential property and are intended to protect existing vegetation, including trees on the residential property that buffer and screen this property from view from nearby garden apartments.

Zoning Code compliance: The proposed action is required by the Zoning Code, which states: "No more than one principal detached structure may be located on: (ii) ... any office-residential, business, or industrial lot that is adjacent to a residential lot (§3-301.a). Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Zoning Administrator must approve construction of more than one principal detached structure or other free-standing structure on ... an office-residential, business, or industrial lot adjacent to a residential lot if, in a specific case: (1) the development otherwise would conform to the requirements of this article; and (2) the Planning Commission approves the design of the development" (§3-301.b). In this case, as more than one structure is proposed for this site, Planning Commission approval is required for this redevelopment of the property.

Community notification: Staff notified the Frankford Improvement Association, Gardenville – Belair Road Business Association, and Harbel Community Organization of this action.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Stosur", is positioned above the printed name.

Thomas J. Stosur
Director